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ABSTRACT

Thirteen Second Chance Schools in 11 countries attempt to fight school failure and social exclusion in the European Union (EU) by enabling pupils who have at most completed lower secondary school to acquire basic skills that will allow them to embark on a strategy of lifelong learning while supporting the innovation and the growth of the European economy. The schools accept pupils, usually up to age 25, for whom normal school attendance is not still compulsory. The particularities of each school varied, but some general characteristics were as follows: (1) a committed partnership with local authorities, social services, associations, and the private sector-- the latter with a view to offering possible training places and jobs to pupils; (2) a teaching and counseling approach focused on the needs, wishes, and abilities of individual pupils and stimulation of active learning on their part; (3) flexible teaching modules allowing combinations of basic skills development with practical training in and by enterprises; and (4) a central role for the acquisition of skills in and through information and communications technology and other new technologies. Results of a 1999 evaluation include the following: the retention rate has been 94%; the schools have been successful in setting up local partnerships, particularly with employers; and the schools appear to give good value for the money. The pilot program should be mainstreamed within the national education and training systems. (Includes 9 annexes.) (MO)

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Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Education
Development of education policies

SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS
THE RESULTS OF A EUROPEAN PILOT PROJECT

Report

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European Commission

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Education

Development of education policies

SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS

THE RESULTS OF A EUROPEAN PILOT PROJECT

Report

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
It can be accessed through the Europa server (http://europa.eu.int).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

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PREFACE

The insertion of young people into society in general, and the labour market in particular, remains a central challenge in the continuing construction of the European Union. The forces of innovation and the growth of the European economy are based on the knowledge and skills of its citizens.

There is evidence of an acceleration in the evolution of technology, science and commerce. The continuous updating of know-how becomes the prime asset for keeping pace. Even so, a significant number of young people fail at school and consequently do not acquire the requisite «base-line» skills and capabilities.

In the European Union, one out of five young people aged 18-24 acquire lower secondary education at the most. Some Member States score significantly above the average, whereas there are alarmingly low scores in certain urban or decentralised areas, as well as in disadvantaged social groups within different countries.

Educational institutions are facing a dilemma. On the one hand, economic effectiveness; on the other, social justice in terms of how they organise the learning process. The demands of the information society; inflation of qualifications on the labour market, and increased emphasis on performance and competitiveness may lead them to bolster the curriculum. This tends to dramatically amplify problems such as fatigue, truancy, learning difficulties and, as a consequence, school failure.

In the learning society in which we live, social stratifications are increasingly based on the demarcation lines between the "haves" and "have-nots" of skill and qualifications. Dropping out of school has more lasting consequences than it had in the previous decade. It can mark an individual for life and radically narrow the scope of his life-projects.

The learning society begins at school. Schools should develop not only the basic reading, writing and calculating skills which enable a person to absorb and analyse information, it should also develop a taste for the acquisition of knowledge, as well as general learning techniques (learning how to learn). Skills relating to new technologies, foreign languages, communication skills, as well as «meta», «transversal» and «personal» skills and attitudes, are increasingly regarded as the basic requirements of this new economy.

Pupils who drop out of school without these basic skills are less able, less willing and less organised to embark on a strategy of life-long learning. Succeeding at school is a sine qua non condition in the knowledge-based labour market and society.

Launching the Second Chance School scheme as a follow-up to its 1995 White Paper «Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society», the European Commission, together with Member States and local authorities, decided to make a stand against this phenomenon by providing new, tailor-made avenues back to the world of work and active citizenship for these deprived young people.

We were not just beating the drum as "caring" politicians. Our economies truly needed these young people, who were lost treasures of potential. Since 1995 there has been increased recognition of this fact. Now, we believe that the Second Chance Schools may very well have paved the way for recovery.

Fighting school drop-out has been integrated in the 'Luxembourg' employment process; it has received renewed impetus at the Lisbon summit of 23-24 March 2000 and school failure has been adopted as one of the Structural Indicators for the Implementation of the Lisbon strategy. The European Report on Quality of School Education was also significant. It was adopted by education ministers of 28 European countries in Bucharest in June 2000, recognising school drop-out rates as a quality indicator of school education. The Second Chance Schools are also included as one of the Action points of the Action Framework for Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has called on all its Member States to launch second chance school pilot projects.

Though specific funding for the Second Chance School projects was not available in 1996, the new Objective Three of the Structural Funds and the innovative Grundtvig strand of the SOCRATES II programme now offer ample financial opportunities to support positive action in this field.

We are starting to see the positive results of these Second Chance School projects as they are summarised in this publication. I hope we can all find in these results new sources of inspiration for our fight against school failure and social exclusion.

Viviane REDING

Member of the European Commission
responsible for Education and Culture

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSIONS

1.1. Inclusion in a knowledge-based economy

A significant number of young people in Europe fail in school and do not acquire the skills and competencies necessary for their social and labour market integration. They are thus unable to respond adequately to accelerating technological, scientific and economic change in the societies in which they live.

In the European Union, an average 20.5%[1] of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 only acquire lower secondary education at most. Some Member States lie significantly above this average. Furthermore, alarmingly higher rates exist in certain urban or peripheral areas, as well as among disadvantaged social groups.

The learning society we live in today is creating new social stratifications between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in the area of skills and qualifications. Dropping out from school therefore has much more lasting repercussions than it had in previous decades. It is something that can mark an individual for life and radically narrow the range of life projects open to the person in question.

Failure at school affects all classes and groups in society, but not all of them equally. School dropout is not a socially 'neutral' phenomenon. It affects some groups more than others. Surveys show that dropouts often come from low-income families and there appears to be a strong inter-generational component in school failure. Many of these young people come from broken homes and only barely integrated immigrant and refugee families. Dropping out of school therefore is not an isolated phenomenon of learning failure. It is, like social exclusion, related to a multitude of social, health, family and financial factors. Although school failure is only one consideration in a larger 'domino-effect' of social deprivation, dropping out of education is often the fatal stumbling block that deprives young people of skills, qualifications, purpose and order in life, as well as the social contacts and environment they need in order to be heard and appreciated.

The fight against school failure is at the heart of the debate on educational reform. It is vital for a successful sustainable knowledge-based

[1] Source: Eurostat, Labour Market Survey 1998. Strictly speaking this is the definition of 'early school leavers'. Another term which is used in reference to this definition is that of 'school dropout'. Currently the definition given is the only one that exists at European level. It is not ideal since it only registers dropout when the person who drops out enters the statistics at the age of 18. There is no statistical definition or instrument to register the 'act' of prematurely abandoning school as and when it occurs, which is often well before the age of 18. This may partly be because schooling during some of these earlier years is compulsory which means that *de jure*, though not *de facto*, dropout is non-existent. In the current report, the term 'dropouts' will be used in a broad sociological sense, referring to young people of any age who have prematurely abandoned school without obtaining basic skills and qualifications.

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economy, a stable purposeful society and a democracy to which all can contribute.

1.2. Origins of the Second Chance Schools

On 29 November 1995, the Commission adopted a White Paper on education and training entitled 'Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society'. Five main objectives were identified in that paper, the third of which was 'combating exclusion'.

The experimental scheme for 'Second Chance Schools' was proposed under the third objective and given concrete form by the Commission. The projects concerned were intended to provide new education and training opportunities to young excluded people who lacked the skills and qualifications to enter further training or the job market.

After the publication of the scheme in the White Paper, the Commission was soon confronted with spontaneous expressions of interest from local and regional authorities. Before the launch of the pilot projects at the end of 1996, some 80 expressions of interest had been received. Over the course of four years (1996-2000) this number climbed to more than 300.

The interest has been stronger in some countries than others. From the United Kingdom alone, some 40 expressions of interest were received from cities and regions. France, Spain and Italy followed with between 20 and 30 each. There was also interest in Germany, but interest was more muted in the Scandinavian and Benelux countries. There have also been expressions of interest from peripheral areas, including all French DOM-TOMs, the Canary islands and Gibraltar, as well as non-EU countries (such as Argentina, Brazil, Poland, Romania, Estonia, Norway, Algeria and Tunisia).

Pilot projects in this field were launched gradually in the Member States after consultation and dialogue with Commission services. An exchange of letters between the Commissioner and the minister in the country concerned confirmed the establishment of a Second Chance School in that country. It is appropriate to recall that this has been a slow and delicate process. Education policy is governed by the principle of subsidiarity and some Member States initially feared the imposed 'institutionalisation' of Second Chance Schools in their country.

However, in dialogue with Member States, the experimental, non-institutional and 'pilot' nature of the scheme was emphasised to reassure them that any individual project would be shaped primarily by their own educational environment, traditions and legal requirements. The aim was neither a European incursion into education systems, nor the imposition of a particular model.

The result of this consultation was that 13 Second Chance Schools were set up in 11 countries:

- Germany (Cologne and Halle),
- Denmark (Svendborg),
- Spain (Barcelona and Bilbao),
- Finland (Hämeenlinna),
- France (Marseille),
- Greece (Athens),
- Italy (Catania),
- The Netherlands (Heerlen),
- Portugal (Seixal),
- Sweden (Norrköping) and the
- United Kingdom (Leeds)

Luxembourg is a special case. A Second Chance School is actually under development but has never been formally confirmed, in writing, as a pilot project. However, in 1999 and 2000, Luxembourg project representatives took part in network meetings.

A second French (and 14th European) pilot project was announced in Bordeaux in June 1999 but has run into institutional difficulties and has yet to be launched.

Although all these projects were confirmed between 1996 and 1999, some did not actually start until 2000 (the Greek and Portuguese projects). See Annex 2 for details of the selection and launch years of the various projects.

1.3. Characteristics of the Second Chance Schools

The particularities of each school were to depend to a large extent on local and national circumstances but some 'general' characteristics were considered important:

1) A committed partnership with local authorities, social services, associations and the private sector, the latter in particular with a view to offering possible training places and jobs to pupils;

2) A teaching and counselling approach focused on the needs, wishes and abilities of individual pupils; stimulation of active learning on their part;

3) Flexible teaching modules allowing combinations of basic skills development (numeracy, literacy, social skills, etc.) with practical training in and by enterprises;

4) A central role for the acquisition of skills in and through ICT and new technologies.

As regards the target group, it was decided after careful consideration to fix a lower age limit linked to the formal school-leaving age. In order not to have 'parallel' schools which might undermine the compulsory nature of mainstream schooling, Second Chance Schools were not to accept pupils for whom normal school attendance was still compulsory. An upper age limit was not set, although it has become common practice to consider the age of 25 as a ceiling of sorts (see Annex 4). An exception is Athens, in which attempts to bridge 'second chance' and 'adult' education have resulted in a higher upper age limit.

Finally, in order to take account of opportunities to return to school which already existed in some national education systems, it was decided not to differentiate between Second Chance Schools within or outside the formal educational system – both would be allowed.

As a result of this decision, the network became pluralistic in terms of its links to the formal education system. Naturally, these links had consequences in terms of *inter alia* school capacity, teacher recruitment formalities, specific aspects of the curriculum and institutional links/partnerships. It was also recognised that some countries had longer traditions, and greater potential for local reintegration initiatives than others. Whilst in some countries, therefore, the Second Chance School pilot project was a completely new phenomenon, in others it actually built on already existing structures (Annex 3).

More generally, all the schools are products of very different constitutional, social, cultural, historical and educational circumstances within each Member State, with local or regional specifics sometimes intensifying this diversity. Furthermore, in discussing policies for social inclusion, it is sometimes difficult to agree on common terminology across Member States. Terms such as 'inclusion/exclusion', 'disadvantaged/marginalised' youth, 'competence', 'qualification', 'insertion' and 'basic skills' have very different real connotations and emotional impact from one country to the next.

1.4. Role and activities of the European Commission from 1996 to 2000

The following six main European activities may be singled out:

a) Support for the selected pilot projects

Once a project was formally selected as the 'national' pilot project, the Commission launched a restricted call for tender based on a call for expressions of interest to select a consultant who would help the project develop. Thus all pilot projects, with one exception[2], had the assistance of an adviser with a 12-month contract. These consultants were to ensure that schools developed in accordance with the general principles established by the Commission and help projects to mature whilst identifying funding sources to support them. They were also to keep the Commission informed of developments in the projects for which they were responsible.

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2 Cologne was not given a consultant because it had already assigned a consultant itself.

b) *Networking of selected projects*

In December 1996, an international conference was organised in Marseille, to introduce the concept of the second chance school to a large public[3].

In July 1997, a large European launching conference was held with the participation of the mayors of the various cities concerned. The proceedings of this conference may be accessed on the Internet.[4]

The Commission subsequently organised a range of activities to facilitate the exchange of experience and practical co-operation between the projects. On average, three working meetings a year took place, usually in Brussels. They discussed themes of common interest, the planning of joint work and the ongoing development of the projects.

Three larger thematic seminars with the participation of external experts were organised, each in one of the host cities (Bilbao, 1997, *The profile of teachers and pupils*, a cross-border seminar in Cologne/Heerlen, 1998, on *The use of the new technologies* and in Seixal, 1998, a seminar on *The relationships with enterprises*). These meetings coincided with large 'launch' conferences for the host project, enabling a wide-ranging exchange of views between local players and European guests.

The European Commission also financed an electronic network (intranet) under the 'ISPO' programme for a period of 18 months.[5]

Furthermore, the Commission has taken the initiative in organising an annual gathering of pupils. What started out as a sports tournament in Cologne in 1998 has gradually developed into an extraordinary annual event, combining sports with social, educational and cultural activities. The second event took place in Hämeenlinna in 1999, the third in Catania in 2000 and the fourth was held in Marseille in 2001.

In May 2000, the Commission and the Boston-based Education Development Centre jointly organised a short study tour by 12 delegates from six Second Chance Schools to visit similar projects in the United States.[6]

Finally, the schools themselves have set up joint projects under the regular Education, Training and Youth community programmes and developed their own bilateral exchanges of pupils and teachers. They have also taken part in information conferences held by cities outside the network which were interested in the Second Chance Schools approach, but not included in the Commission's network of pilot projects. In particular, considerable contributions were made to important conferences in Cadiz (Spain) and Rome (Italy).

c) *Inclusive activities - the 'second pillar'*

The Commission was given a mandate not only to launch pilot projects for Second Chance Schools but also to identify, exploit and network similar projects already existing in the Member States (the 'second pillar'). With this goal in mind, a large networking conference was organised in May 1998 with 160 representatives of projects that were felt to exemplify good practice in the Member States. These projects were carefully selected on the basis of various studies[7] on school failure under the SOCRATES III.3.1. studies programme,[8] as well as special Eurydice research. The proceedings of the conference have been published and can be accessed on the Internet.[9]

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3 L'Ecole de la Deuxième Chance de Marseille à la lumière des expériences internationales - Editions de l'Aube, 1997, ISBN 2-87678-383-5

4 http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/2chance/indexen.html

5 A new intranet has now been set up by the European Association (E2C-Europe)

6 In the White Paper, the idea of Second Chance Schools was inspired by US experience with 'accelerated schools'

7 Available in book-form: 'The Right to Learn - Educational Strategies for socially excluded youth in Europe' edited by Ides Nicaise, Bristol, November 2000, ISBN 1-86134-288-8

8 http.//europa.eu.int/comm/education/poledu/echec-en.html

9 Integration of all young people into society through education and training, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, November 2000, ISBN 92-828-7634-9, available on internet on http//europa.eu.int/comm/education/2chance/society.html

*d) **Political activities - gaining recognition***

The purpose of the Second Chance School initiative was also to place the issue of school failure and its consequences firmly on the political agenda of education authorities in the Member States.

A common argument of education authorities has been that the prevention of school failure is more important than remediation and that national solutions to this end should be sought within the regular school system rather than locally outside it. An important objective in launching the Second Chance Schools has therefore been to bring a 'forgotten group' to the attention of education policy makers – a group for whom 'prevention' was no longer a choice. Young, excluded people without basic skills and qualifications were predominantly perceived as a target group for social and employment policy, but not necessarily for education and training.

The message and expected results of these projects, in which young people are brought back into a 'virtuous' circle of learning and out of a vicious circle of deprivation and dependency, have been designed to highlight the predicament of this target group as a challenge to education establishments, and not merely a concern of the employment and care sectors. The Second Chance Schools initiative should help encourage fresh thinking about the place of 'school dropouts' in Member State education policies.

*e) **Sustaining the network - establishment of a European association***

The Commission very actively promoted the establishment of an independent European association for the Second Chance School pilot projects. The intention was that such a body should maintain links between the projects on completion of the pilot phase and extend the network to other interested parties not formally included in the initial 'closed circle' of projects. In 1998 and 1999, several preparatory meetings held with the host cities led finally to the creation of 'E2C-Europe', the European Association of Cities for Second Chance Schools[10] in Heerlen (Netherlands) on 4 June 1999. The association is now formally established (under the 1901 French legislation on associations) and its first elected president for a two-year period is the mayor of Marseille (France), Mr Jean-Claude Gaudin.

*f) **Financing of the pilot projects***

It should be remembered that the Commission was not to be responsible for financing the projects. Although the consultants had the task of identifying sources of funding and most projects eventually obtained Community financial support (mainly via the EU Structural Funds), there has never in fact been a direct link between the 'piloting' of the Second Chance Schools and project financing as such. As a result, sources and patterns of funding vary enormously (see Annex 9).

1.5. Executive summary of Second Chance School pilot project evaluation

In 1999, an evaluation exercise involving external experts was launched in order to determine the achievements of Second Chance Schools and lessons that could be learned from the standpoint of methodology and teaching (see Annex 1 for a list of the various lots in the call for tender and the firms involved in the evaluation exercise).

Three thematic reports were finalised by early September 2000. A summary overview, which builds on these reports with additional quantitative data and an overall, political assessment of the pilot projects, was finalised in early November 2000. These external reports may be accessed on the Internet.[11]

Although the external evaluation offers an interesting, informative and globally positive assessment, this has to be regarded as a progress report rather than a definitive appraisal. The schools were launched at differ-

[10] http://www.e2c-europe.org

[11] http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/2chance/evaluation_en.html

ent dates over the four years from 1996 to 2000 (see Annex 2), and many of them have not even completed a single school cycle. For example, information on actual job placements secured by pupils is still very limited. Secondly, the learning curves of these new and experimental projects are very steep. The consultants have noted constant change and development in the different thematic areas. Finally, whilst job placements can be confirmed as soon as a school-leaver enters the labour market, further analysis is needed to determine whether placements are sustained and lead to long-term social integration. Assuming the Commission or the schools themselves are interested, there is a need for a 'longitudinal' study which takes a further look at the results achieved by Second Chance Schools some 5 to 10 years from now.

However, the results so far are encouraging. Evidence suggests that Second Chance Schools do indeed offer – as their name suggests they should – a second chance to young people who risk being left behind, helping them back towards learning and, with it, social and vocational integration.

It is no mean achievement on the part of these 13 schools to have enrolled almost 4000 young people who had formerly turned their backs on education and tended to regard schools as places of discontent, frustration, adversity and, ultimately, failure and self-depreciation.

Over half of them are currently still following courses in the Second Chance Schools, and more than a quarter of them have successfully finished the school. Contrary to certain sceptical forecasts at the outset, the dropout rate has been only 6%. This is a very low level of further school failure for a target group of pupils who have already suffered the traumatising and destabilising experience of abandoning school. The schools seem able to turn the tide and guide them along a positive new learning pathway.

It is revealing that, in one external survey of a sample of current pupils, 90% indicated that their Second Chance School had brought about a genuine improvement in their situation.

Second Chance Schools have generally been successful in setting up local partnerships, particularly with employers. They have also made optimal use of their educational resources, meaning first and foremost the teachers, who remain the pivotal element, but also guidance and counselling techniques and new technologies. There is an interest in innovative teaching methods and the schools are finding new ways to validate informal and personal skills and competencies, without losing sight of the need for formal recognised qualifications equivalent to those awarded in mainstream education.

There are nonetheless still areas in which some of the schools could improve performance by exploiting good practice adopted at others. Considered as a whole, the Second Chance School pilot projects have developed highly valuable approaches in dealing with the numerous and complex problems faced by their target group.

Naturally, the projects have their price. Second Chance Schools require considerable educational resources corresponding to an average 5.9 pupils per teacher/tutor and 3.9 pupils per computer. In mainstream secondary education in the European Union, the figures are between 12.1 and 14.5 for the pupil/teacher ratio and 27.7 in the case of the pupil/computer ratio (see Annex 5 for details). The average cost of a Second Chance School per pupil is € 7901, whereas the corresponding figure in the regular education system is approximately € 4696 (unweighted average).

Nevertheless, this investment seems to be justified by the results. The ability of Second Chance Schools effectively to retain and assist 94% of their pupils (with a dropout rate of only 6%) represents a good return on investment. Many other valuable initiatives launched by Member States in an effort to counter dropout have experienced similar difficulty in retaining this difficult target population. Against this backdrop, the methodological approach of Second Chance Schools appears to give good value for money.

However, not all the current pilot schools are sustainable. Many of them are funded as 'projects' rather than 'educational establishments', and rely heavily on local, regional and European funds (see Annex 8) which are project-based, non-structural and subject to sometimes politically biased periodic review and decision-making cycles.

The need for formal recognition of the diplomas and qualifications of Second Chance School leavers is a second argument in favour of 'mainstreaming' the pilot experience within national education and training systems.

The current report offers sufficient evidence to suggest that the Second Chance Schools play a significant role in the reintegration of young people lacking basic skills and competencies and are relatively cost-effective in doing so.

This report on the implementation of the Second Chance School pilot projects is a further demonstration of the positive role that education and training can have in combating social exclusion. It would be appropriate for Member States to consider ways in which the methods and the lessons of the Second Chance School scheme can be made an integral part of their strategies to combat exclusion, whilst retaining the advantages of flexibility and partnership offered by local solutions.

In the following sections, the results of the Second Chance School pilot projects are analysed in more detail.

2. THE EXPERIENCE OF PARTNERSHIP

When the Second Chance School pilot projects were conceived, local partnerships were to be an important key to success. Among the broader range of partners, including local authorities and locally active youth associations and NGOs, the role of employers was deemed to be of particular importance. Employers would not only prove crucial in understanding the skill requirements of the labour market, but they had the important role of offering Second Chance School pupils traineeships and, ultimately, concrete job prospects.

2.1. Local partnerships: between co-operation and affirmation

All schools have well-established links with a large variety of partners including, first of all, the local authorities, employment agencies, enterprises, educational establishments, research centres and universities, as well as youth/neighbourhood workers and NGOs. The strengths of these links vary, with schools giving different priorities to different partners. Generally speaking, the strongest partners are the local authorities, enterprises and parents.

In some schools, however, there is only a weak relationship with other training agencies in the locality. This is most likely because schools initially wish to affirm their role and identity in the local 'landscape' of social policy players, but this may not necessarily be the best course of action. In some cases, better use could have been made not just of course and teaching materials developed by those outside agencies, but also of their expertise and premises.

2.2. The pivotal (but not charitable) role of employers

Relationships with employers are essential for the success of the Second Chance Schools. For many young people, the presence of employers sends a message of hope and serious intent from the outset. Young people understand that the school represents a gateway to the labour market.

The involvement of employers however goes further. They show young people that a job requires skills, including basic skills. By offering work experience, employers assist pupils in acquiring the qualifications which are in demand on the labour market. Employers keep the schools abreast of niches in the local economy, showing where the pupil's skills are useful and where growth sectors are.

The way in which the Second Chance Schools have implemented these partnerships differs from one school to the next. There are schools such as Marseille and Norrköping which have drawn up tripartite agreements between the school, a pupil and an employer, which map out the rights and duties of each of the three partners, including a 'moral' commitment by the employer to provide the pupil with a job. In Cologne, the pupils themselves are the sole

party linked by contract to the employers, but the school maintains a database of 400 local enterprises which offer placements to its pupils.

In other cities, the emphasis is placed on the comprehensive mobilisation and networking of employers using intermediary structures. Such is the case for instance with Bilbao and Barcelona, where the local development agency *Lan-Ekintza* and the *Consell de la Formació Professional I Ocupacional* (Council for Vocational Training), respectively, as the founders of the Second Chance Schools in question, are themselves local agents with direct access to the world of work. A similar pattern is followed in Heerlen, which is largely based on *MAECON*, the regional job agency, whereas Cologne has set up a specific foundation for the school, of which the Chambers of Commerce and the Labour Office are members.

A third model is that of Leeds, which works on 'flagship' projects with important employers. Instead of opting for a standard form of relationship with employers, a more tailor-made and project-based approach is promoted, connecting distinct course modules to distinct employers.

Of course, the possibilities for working with significant employers are very much pre-determined by the economic conditions of the area in question. Catania for instance, based in rural and peripheral Sicily, mainly works with small enterprises and handicraft firms or co-operatives.

Whilst the partnership between enterprises and Second Chance Schools is thus clearly a success, and although these relations are managed very professionally and intensively, it needs to be noted that there is at present hardly any 'sponsoring' in the narrow, financial, sense of the word.

In order to find employment for their pupils, many schools are developing active job-search policies and policies of communication with enterprises. Some schools indicate that after an initial 'easy' period of filling existing job vacancies in enterprises, which are often SMEs and handicraft firms, a point of 'saturation' can then be reached, following which it is important for the schools to become more proactive and inventive. Schools are effectively, in some cases, 'suggesting' new types of employment to employers, identifying needs and niches in the market. This is a highly original aspect of the Second Chance Schools, which is unlikely to be found in mainstream education and training establishments.

2.3. Links to the formal education system - a need to be involved

Most schools have legal and/or practical links with the formal education authorities - there is no 'rejection' of the formal education system as some opponents of the Second Chance Schools initially feared.

Links with formal education systems have in fact developed although they tend to be organised on a 'need to be involved' basis as and when necessary for teacher recruitment, recognition of qualifications, and the meeting of certain criteria in the definition of the curriculum. Whilst relationships are thus mostly formalistic, there is no competition with or avoidance of the formal education system.

2.4. The broader span of Second Chance Schools: health, culture, external communication and the European dimension

Most schools aim to incorporate health and cultural aspects in their approach but actual progress towards full integration of these fields into the curriculum is still limited. Particularly where health aspects are concerned, there is a stark contrast between the small number of schools developing true health services and other schools preferring to 'outsource' those aspects.

There are good examples where aspects of health and culture are firmly integrated, particularly in Marseille and Norrköping as regards health, and Athens and Catania as regards culture and the arts. In Seixal, a role is reserved for drama as a tool to teach verbal and non-verbal skills of expression.

The presence or absence of a health/citizenship dimension within the curriculum does not necessarily have a direct impact on patterns of partnership. Some schools that have developed resources of their own in this field may feel that they can do without the assistance of outside specialist support, whilst others look for complementarity with outside sources. The solutions found are different and there may be a need to compare them and develop a more explicit analysis of the internalisation or externalisation of this aspect and the services derived from it.

European meetings of teachers and pupils, particularly the latter, are confirmed as very important and are much appreciated. They are particularly valuable in boosting and motivating pupils and usually constitute their first (and very positive) discovery of Europe and its countries, cultures and languages.

Initial transfers of methodologies are now taking place between teachers. The European network of Second Chance Schools appears to be firmly established. The positive role of this network is fully recognised.

The Second Chance Schools have all developed good communication and information tools. They have all been widely covered in the local and national press, with articles that are usually very positive and encouraging. The European dimension also contributes to this. Visits from other schools and/or European meetings provide ample opportunities for attracting the attention of the press. This is considered to make the schools more sustainable in the future, since most schools depend on non-structural project funding and therefore need to develop and sustain local and national goodwill and support.

Although the main national institutional partner of the Second Chance Schools is often the education ministry, there may be a need to forge closer relationships with the ministries responsible for employment and social affairs. Those ministries are at the vanguard of the Luxembourg Employment Process, and are usually, with the finance ministries, responsible for the disbursement of funds from the European Social Fund. As the role of education and training is increasingly recognised in the fight against unemployment and exclusion, policy makers in these ministries may have an interest in becoming more familiar with the potential advantages of the Second Chance School approach. However, the schools are, generally speaking, not well connected to them.

2.5. Partnership in the urban environment - the challenge of space management

The teachers are naturally not the architects of the school building, nor are they responsible for the spatial planning of the area. This may be obvious but, for some schools, it does create a problem. The lack of space or the failure to exploit what space there is, affecting the size of classrooms for instance, is not always conducive to the principles of individualisation and/or socialisation. Moreover, some schools are located in deprived urban areas - as would be expected - characterised by constant public works and decaying buildings. The infrastructure of the school (and its area) is therefore sometimes difficult to reconcile with its social and educational ambitions because the way space is used is sometimes too traditional or even restrictive for educational innovation

There is a need for teachers, architects and construction/renovation companies to communicate better. Proper management of internal and external space is not always sufficiently recognised as an educational issue. The external evaluation reports suggest this could be remedied by actually locating Second Chance Schools outside the catchment area of the target group in order to have fewer space restrictions. The case of the Svendborg school, located in quasi-rural surroundings, is mentioned as an example here. The relative quiet and isolation here can also be conducive to the development of interaction and solidarity within the school.

3. THE EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The need for teaching innovation was naturally very high on the agenda for the Second Chance School scheme. As the target group consists mainly (though not exclusively) of school dropouts, it is essential that the 'second chance' be very different from the 'first chance'. Young people would not wish to return to a 'place of failure', nor would they be more likely to succeed, unless the main features of the education on offer differed significantly from those of the regular school system.

Innovation is therefore needed in the way the transfer of knowledge and skills is organised. Individual learning pathways are important, as well as the recognition that very specific teaching skills may be required for this difficult target group.

3.1. The key role of the teacher

The evaluation shows that, despite differences in teacher recruitment procedures, schools do enrol teachers who, by and large, have particularly relevant qualifications and experience. Many have a background as special needs teachers, or qualifications in special education, psychology, pedagogy or social pedagogy as well as pastoral care.

In addition to formal qualifications, all schools stress the importance of human skills and the need for teachers to feel a deeper, personal commitment to the success of the pupils. Empathy and compassion are evident in the schools and were also observed by the evaluators.

The ratio of pupils to teachers/counsellors confirms the personal and intensive relationship between them. It ranges from 1.3 to 10.5, with the average being 5.9 pupils per teacher/counsellor (see Annex 5). Much of the dramatic change which can take place in the life of a young person takes place in the individual microcosms which link him or her to a caring adult. The constructive relationships between teachers and pupils in the Second Chance Schools are a key ingredient in their success.

The schools are aware that these specific skills need constant updating. Teacher training is organised in different ways in all the schools. Some teachers have had 'induction' training before taking up their appointments (in Athens for instance), whilst others (such as Bilbao) 'outsource' permanent teacher training to universities. In some schools, teacher training means participation in standard external modules provided by training agencies, whilst others prefer customised internal training.

Nevertheless, teacher training does not appear to be organised in a systematic, continuous/recurrent way. There may be a need to improve this by comparing the different approaches adopted by the Second Chance Schools. This process has already begun with the Second Chance School 'Teacher Summits', which are now organised annually. Moreover, the European association

E2C-Europe is currently undertaking, under the Connect[12] programme, a 'train-the-trainers' programme devoted to life skills (health in particular) and social skills. Entrepreneurs who place the pupils in their companies are themselves often in need of further training so as to improve their understanding of how to handle these young people and transmit knowledge to them. This Connect project therefore also attempts to enable the schoolteachers to transmit some of their pedagogic skills to the entrepreneurs.

3.2. Guidance and counselling - the learner at the centre

All Second Chance Schools are characterised by the comprehensive integration of guidance, counselling and mentoring in the curriculum. Whilst some schools organise this as a distinct and separate activity or 'profession', others integrate it into the various disciplines. Consequently, some schools have specific tutors or counsellors, whereas others give their teachers a dual role. Advisory help typically covers much more than learning difficulties or job searches alone. It includes issues such as housing, health, money, attitudes, law and order, democracy and citizenship, human relations, hygiene, nutrition and consumption, substance abuse, childhood experiences, parents, aggression, sex, emotions and relationships, etc. In the case of serious social or psychological disturbances, some schools have enrolled outside professional help.

The evaluation confirms that the schools can be seen to put the learner at the centre. There are intake interviews, special care is mobilised wherever needed through guidance and counselling, and in the vocational part of the programme, particularly work experience, the interests and abilities of the pupils are taken into account.

It is nevertheless difficult to back up the assumption about individualisation with statistical data on the degree of differentiation within the curriculum itself. Only five schools could demonstrate that pupils can complete the school at different exit levels. Another five schools indicated that 100% of the hours within the curriculum are in fact obligatory. There are, on the other hand, examples of very flexible schools, where only a minority of hours are obligatory (Heerlen, Norrköping), or where options for different completion levels do exist. It is not clear why other schools are not in a position to provide such information on their curriculum. Here too, a future comparison of the approaches adopted by the Second Chance Schools would be most instructive for all involved.

To consider this issue one should, as always, treat statistics with care and common sense. Even within obligatory hours and subjects, pupils can be allowed to learn at different speeds or in different styles. Moreover, a considerable number of activities actually take place outside school - in the world of work or through various outside activities that the schools organise.

This, therefore, is an area in which learning curves are steep and where Second Chance Schools can still learn a lot from each other in the next few years.

3.3. Striving for formal and non-formal qualifications

The great majority of Second Chance Schools have adopted strategies or acquired recognition to ensure that pupils who successfully leave the schools have formally recognised qualifications and certificates. Whilst most Second Chance Schools are employment/integration driven, measures are also introduced to ensure compatibility with formal paper qualifications, allowing pupils to continue education should they wish to do so. However, the strategies adopted are different from one school to another, depending on the possibilities and flexibility within the formal education systems. Some schools can offer the same diplomas (for instance the *Schulabschluss* in the case of the German schools, national qualifications in the case of Athens, the NVQs and GCSEs in Leeds, the *scuola media* in Catania); others

[12] Connect promotes preparatory actions based on the synergies between education, training, culture, research and new technologies, supported under budgetline B3-1002. The call for proposals 1999/C 163/04 was published in the *Official Journal* of 10.6.1999. For more information on Connect http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/connect/call.html

offer the possibility of transferring credits back to the formal system (Portugal) and yet others organise extra tuition to help pupils obtain formal qualifications through state exams.

Schools are also finding new ways of certifying non-formal qualifications, either through their own systems or through partnerships with established training centres, where the course in question is vocational. For example, Marseille is working with 'judo belts' to recognise progress in non-formal qualifications, whereas Leeds gives 'awards' for a personal feat ('being a good friend'), often carrying trendy titles borrowed from cinema or TV and awarded in an atmosphere analogous to Oscar night. Notwithstanding the importance of formally recognised certificates, most schools emphasise that their real strength is in fields where certification is hardest, such as training in life skills, social, psychological and professional guidance, and work on the self-confidence and self-respect of pupils.

3.4. Innovation in teaching methods

The external evaluation report affirms the degree to which innovation takes place in the teaching and learning methods of the Second Chance Schools, whilst again emphasising that the schools constitute a very heterogeneous family in which each is focusing on different areas of innovation.

In a fundamental sense, innovation compared with regular schools can be observed in the basic philosophical view adopted by the schools vis-à-vis competencies and learning. Teachers are the 'archaeologists' uncovering hidden skills. In Athens, this process of self-discovery has been given a 'real-life' equivalent because the teachers take the pupils on discovery trips to deprived urban neighbourhoods, encouraging them to see beauty and potential behind the obvious signs of neglect and decay.

Schools develop their own distinctive views of the definition of 'relevance' in learning. In Svendborg, for instance, any knowledge that cannot be converted into an 'ability to do' is considered worthless. The 'mission statement' of learning is to allow pupils to amass as many 'I Can Do's' as possible, thus building up their identity and self-respect.

The way learning is organised (use of the internet, small classrooms, workshops), the ways in which non-formal learning (workshops and training in companies) and informal learning (such as excursions or the 'adventure' games organised in Hämeenlinna to develop group solidarity and perseverance) are encapsulated in the learning programme, and the ways in which learning is sequenced and recognised (Leeds, for instance, relies on an approach it calls 'bite-sized' learning involving very small modules of information which allow pupils an instant and continuous sense of progress without fatigue or discouragement) are all pieces in the puzzle of learning, and the Second Chance Schools demonstrate inventiveness in this field.

Various schools are implementing new pedagogical approaches, such as the Feuerstein methodology[13] in Heerlen, originally developed in Israel for slow and low-level learners, or the theory of multiple intelligence in Svendborg, originally developed by the American scholar Howard Gardner[14] and further extended by the Danish psychologist Stein Hilling.

Also noteworthy is the Athens Second Chance School in which well-known university specialists have specifically designed each of the nine subjects in the curriculum. Interesting, too, is *La Vie Collective* in Marseille as an approach to the introduction of civic education. *La Vie Collective* makes all aspects of the daily life of the Second Chance School subject to 'participative democracy' in the school, in which decisions are never imposed but discussed and taken jointly. The school itself becomes a mini-society/democracy preparing for subsequent active participation in real society. Finally, a European project to disseminate the 'Goldstein'[15] methodology, an approach developed by an American neuro-psychologist on how social skills can be 'taught' to young people, is currently in progress.

There are constant positive developments in this area. New initiatives often use European projects as a launching pad. For instance, with the video scheme under the Connect pro-

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13 http//www.newhorizons.org/trm_feuerstein.html

14 http://edweb.gsn.org/edref.mi.gardner.html

15 http://samgoldstein.com/

gramme, pupils have to film their roots and backgrounds, subjects that they sometimes have difficulty in talking about. This project not only teaches them an important audio-visual technique, but also helps them to come to terms with themselves.

3.5. New technologies at the heart of learning

The use of computers is at the heart of learning in most of the schools. PCs, multimedia and the internet enable pupils to acquire the skills needed in today's working world. They are trained to become active members of the information society. The number of pupils per computer within the Second Chance Schools is between 1.6 and 3.7, although two schools have much higher ratios of 9.0 and 13.1 (see Annex 5). The average is 3.9.

Technology is taught as a subject in the schools and, in most cases, is also a tool for learning. Off-the-shelf packages are available for native language instruction, foreign languages and mathematics in the majority of schools, whilst some (Bilbao and Leeds in particular, others increasingly so) are developing their own, customised, software. Some schools are giving e-mail addresses to their pupils. Cologne has an Internet café, whilst Svendborg has developed a true web design technology that actually allows it to compete with private companies in the market place. Unfortunately some of the schools are not as technologically advanced as the others. In the relatively limited number of cases in which the use of ICT is underdeveloped, this is often related to a lack of experience or interest on the part of the teachers.

European projects have been proposed to start collaborative projects on new technologies. The *carte à puce* (smart card) project in Marseille, an electronic skills portfolio for disadvantaged persons, has been 'on-the-shelf' for a considerable time, but requires funding which it has not yet been able to mobilise. The dilemma here is that sponsors and Community programmes often seek to support 'cutting-edge' technology, whereas adapting more dated technology to the needs of disadvantaged groups often gets crowded out by this search for technological novelty.

Another valuable IT project which has been doing the rounds in the group of Second Chance Schools is the 'Job Connect' programme developed in the Leeds School. This is an interactive medium, which acquaints pupils with certain professions, and guides them to those that correspond best to their own interests and capabilities. This application is very significant for young people in the target group, since many of them were born and raised in an environment of unemployment and consequently have an insufficient understanding of 'how work works'. This IT application plays mini-videos showing the type of work and working conditions that various professions actually involve.

Two schools (Marseille, Heerlen) will be participating in the Snow[16] network, which uses a 'virtual enterprise' technology to train pupils in entrepreneurship.

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16 http://www.snow-project.net/

4. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE

4.1. Working with young people left by the wayside

A clear overall picture emerges of young people in distress who are taken in, encouraged and helped by the Second Chance Schools. The schools fulfil a clear and undisputed social and humanitarian function, according to the external evaluators.

Throughout the network, pupils are virtually unanimous in their appreciation of their Second Chance School. They feel valued and important, relations with teachers are based on mutual respect, and teachers do their best to facilitate the learning of their pupils, pushing and enabling them to excel.

Schools often have to search very actively to identify and enrol these young people, sometimes taking them in from the street with the help of neighbourhood workers. Most of them are affected by accumulated interrelated problems of deprivation (health, family, unemployment, lack of confidence), whilst others carry deep emotional scars and have turned their backs on adults, education and society. Whilst their past experiences have made some very aggressive, others have, as one teacher noted, 'moved beyond aggression into a state of total apathy'.

Some schools are dealing with significant proportions of pupils from immigrant backgrounds as in Marseille (70%), Norrköping (41%) and Cologne (45%). One-third of the schools believe that the majority of their pupils live below the poverty line.

A rudimentary analysis of the social profile of the pupils is provided in Annex 7, with figures for indicators such as:

- *Number of pupils living below the poverty line*: there are three schools above 70% and two schools report 36 and 50% respectively, but seven others score between 0% (three schools) and only 14%.

- *Number of pupils with a fragile psychological condition*: less extreme variations are noted than in the case of the poverty line criterion. Most schools (9 out of 12) indicate that a small minority (up to one-third of their pupils) has a fragile socio-psychological personality, but three others record much higher ratings, including Heerlen with 63% and Marseille with 100%.

- *Number of pupils with health problems*: 7 out of 12 schools state that fewer than one-third of their pupils have health problems, but four others are dealing with serious health issues, namely Halle (42%), Seixal (46%), Heerlen (63%) and Marseille (64%).

- The one indicator which does however appear to characterise the target population across the board is the existence of a *fragile family background* (broken homes, single parents, other problems in the parent-to-child relationship, such as violence,

abuse, etc): whilst four schools have relatively low ratings for this problem (not more than one-third of their pupils), the other scores are 40%, 45%, 44%, 65%, 77%, 78%, 89% and, in two cases, 100%.

This would appear to suggest that one of the factors which is most generally relevant in characterising this target group, is the lack of a strong supportive family structure. There is no blame or causality implicit in such a statement. There will be dropouts in 'normal' families, just as there are broken homes in which the fathers, mothers or others are still very supportive of the child in question. However, it does indicate that there is a high correlation and that, as long as dropout exists, education systems fail to help those young people most in need of the stability they can provide.

Whilst some pupils combine appreciation of their second chance with feelings of resentment for the 'first chance' offered in the formal education system, for others it triggers processes of self-discovery and acknowledgement of missed opportunities the first time round. They may also admit that former teachers were not always wrong about them.

4.2. Transition to the world of work

The external evaluation report indicates that precise figures for the social reintegration of pupils from Second Chance Schools would be premature. Most pupils had not in fact completed the curriculum when the evaluation reports were compiled.

It is nonetheless remarkable that these 13 schools have managed to recruit almost 4000 young people who had turned their backs on education. More than half of them (2286) are currently still at school whilst more than a quarter (27%) have successfully found jobs. See Annex 6 for details.

Generally speaking, these young people become employees, mainly in the service sector (28% in hotel, restaurants, catering), craft trades (16% in car manufacturing, electricity and plumbing), the sales sector (11% in commerce and food) or health and welfare (9%). Some pupils have managed to find employment in the IT and multimedia sector (6%).

It is also noteworthy that the dropout rate has been only 6%. This is a very low level of further school failure for a target group of pupils who have already suffered the traumatising and destabilising experience of abandoning school. Evidence thus suggests that the Second Chance Schools seem able to turn the tide and guide these young people along a positive new learning pathway.

4.3. Reaching the hard-to-reach

The definition of the target group proposed by the Commission was based on criteria (lack of basic skills and qualifications, 'socially excluded') which, in a concrete local context, are open to different interpretations and offer flexibility in the actual recruitment of young people.

Whilst this may be an advantage in some ways – and it is unlikely that the Second Chance School projects would have been launched smoothly with overly strict European criteria governing who to recruit – it has resulted in the co-existence of quite different recruitment policies and 'profiles' for pupils.

The definition of the target group initially adopted by the European Commission combined three different elements related to the social condition of the target group ('at risk of social exclusion'), their position on the labour/training market ('not able to find a job or to take advantage of existing training programmes') and their status in the education sector ('not having basic skills/qualifications, but above school-leaving age').

Within that triangle, schools make different choices to define the exact target group. The terminology leaves margins for flexibility. There are schools which target severely disadvantaged pupils, the 'bottom end' of the broader group of socially excluded people. Others, conversely, target the 'top' band among socially excluded young people, i.e. young people without skills, qualifications or a job but with the energy and will-power to improve their situation. Indeed, several schools recruit with 'motivation' as an important criterion.

The evaluation report suggests that they may be doing so in order to achieve quick success, thereby ensuring that their own existence is

sustainable in their local political landscape, given the uncertain financial conditions under which they operate.

At the 'bottom end' too, however, there are differences between the schools. Institutional arrangements within a particular country may mean that some schools can take responsibility for a whole range of 'objective' matters related to the exclusion of the person in question, such as dyslexia, health, drug and substance abuse, or cases of youth delinquency. Other schools might have to refer such cases to special institutions, concentrating only on 'subjective' exclusion issues, such as lack of self-confidence or parental support, or low social/educational aspirations, etc. In addition, some schools operate under strict laws governing confidentiality and are not even in a position to build up complete personal profiles of the young people in question.

It is thus not always evident that the most difficult cases are reached by all the Second Chance Schools. Schools which may initially have operated with certain entrance thresholds are already exhibiting a 'downward' learning curve. After a trial period involving young people whom the schools felt they could handle with reasonable confidence, the latter are reaching further down the social spectrum of the target group towards the more difficult cases. It should also be borne in mind that an exclusively narrow focus on 'hard cases' can only make it more difficult for the school to market itself and might risk stigmatising its pupils. The exact focus can probably never be fixed on the basis of social and educational criteria alone. Political and strategic considerations may also be relevant.

In subsequent analysis of the Second Chance Schools, the main common denominator of the target group is in fact 'lack of sufficient skills/qualifications' rather than 'being socially excluded' or 'at risk of social exclusion'. The latter concepts are largely subjective and often unknown quantities to schools, particularly in countries with strict notions and regulations governing privacy.

These concepts are, moreover, hard to convert into 'recruitment criteria' without stigmatising connotations, and cannot always easily be used to characterise the target group.

It is hence appropriate to state that 'social exclusion' within the Second Chance Schools has been interpreted not as a social 'condition' but as a relative 'position' vis-à-vis the labour market and education sector. The catchment group for the Second Chance Schools is young people with an *unsuccessful transition from education to the world of work*. Retrospectively, this is a more straightforward definition/characterisation than the three-dimensional one adopted in the White Paper.

4.4. The challenge of equal opportunities

In a significant majority of schools, boys outnumber girls (see Annex 4). In addition, there appears to be a tendency for girls to seek stereotype jobs through participation in the Second Chance Schools. Equal opportunities thus appears to be a major challenge in the fight against social exclusion.

On the question of numbers, most schools defend their position by stating that gender is not a selection criterion and that the unequal numbers simply reflect the applications to the school. Indeed, boys actually drop out of school more often than girls.[17] Some schools also note that teenage pregnancy sometimes creates difficulties in keeping girls at school, whereas one school, in Heerlen, has noted that most of the 'hard case' girls who could potentially have been recruited into the Second Chance Schools were victims of sexual abuse and/or were now earning a living as prostitutes. This school's social workers had actually advised against mixing these girls with boys from the harder walks of life and it decided to start as a school exclusively for boys. Finally, a few schools encounter difficulties in 'freeing' girls from family pressures and stereotypes, for instance in immigrant families from Arab countries. In short, in dealing with these issues one is again confronted by the realities of the target groups with which the Second Chance Schools are working. As the existing schools continue to develop after the pilot phase, they must step up their investment in designing more pro-active and creative strategies to deal with the challenge of equal opportunities.

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[17] For statistical analysis, see the study 'Dropping Out and Secondary Education' by M. Bucchi, IARD (Italy) This study was financed by the Socrates 3.3.1. programme.

5. LEARNING FROM THE PILOT PROJECTS

This section offers some final reflections on the nature of the pilot projects themselves, taking a step back from the substantive detail to examine more closely the overall mechanisms.

5.1. A macro-change in the environment – the political objective has been achieved

Political action to fight social exclusion and school failure, along with the financial resources to support it, was significantly boosted during the period in which the pilot projects were operational.

Fighting school dropout has been integrated into the 'Luxembourg' employment process and received renewed impetus at the Lisbon summit of 23-24 March 2000, which set the benchmark to reduce the number of early school leavers (see footnote 1) by 50% before 2010. The number of early school leavers was subsequently adopted as one of the Structural Indicators[18] for implementation of the Lisbon strategy. Also noteworthy is the European Report on Quality of School Education[19], adopted by the education ministers of 28 European countries in Bucharest in June 2000, which recognises school dropout rates as a quality indicator in school education. The Communication from the Commission 'Building an Inclusive Europe'[20] recognises the importance of fighting school failure as part of future strategies. As part of the new open co-ordination method, the Lisbon summit has drawn attention to the need to produce National Action Plans on social inclusion. The relevant political guidelines laid down by the Council call for policies to prevent exclusion from school. The draft Communication from the Commission[21] proposing a long-term strategy for sustainable development mentions the need to tackle school failure so as to reduce poverty and social exclusion.

Whilst, in 1996, there was no specific funding for the Second Chance School projects, the new Objective 3 of the Structural Funds and the new Grundtvig[22] strand of the Socrates II programme[23] now offer ample financial

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18 COM (2000) 594 final, Communication from the Commission 'Structural Indicators'

19 European report on quality of school education: Sixteen Quality Indicators, May 2000, No. ISBN: 92-894-0536-8

20 COM (2000) 79 final, Brussels 1-3-2000

21 Internal working document from the Commission services – Consultation paper for the preparation of a European Union strategy for Sustainable Development, February 2001

22 http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/adult/home.html

23 Decision No. 253/2000/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 January 2000, establishing the second phase of the Community programme Socrates. For a description of the programme, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates.html

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opportunities to support positive actions in this field. Moreover, under the new Urban II Community Initiative, the eligibility of areas is now also related to low levels of educational achievement. The new Equal Community Initiative aims to improve the chances of success of various target groups of people in a weak position on the labour market, including those without basic qualifications.

The Second Chance Schools are included as one of the Action Points under the Action Framework for a Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union[24]. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has called on all its Member States to launch Second Chance School pilot projects[25]

At national level, various Member States have launched their own measures which specifically target early school leavers. France (the *Nouvelles Chances* programme), Italy (the programme of Resource Centres against school failure and social fragmentation, funded by the ERDF[26]) and the UK (the 'New Start' programme) are good examples, whereas the Second Chance School in Greece was, from the outset, one part of a new law for educational reform there. Other countries have existing programmes which are concerned with broader groups of disadvantaged young people (Youthreach in Ireland is a good example) and are becoming increasingly effective in rescuing school dropouts.

Second Chance Schools can, with hindsight, be seen as precursors of new developments in this policy domain. Since the launch of the pilot projects, the issue of exclusion linked to school failure, as observed in the White Paper, has been followed by a significant response in different relevant policy arenas. In their own separate ways, these developments retrospectively justify the launch of the pilot projects in 1996, since they have served as a beacon, drawing the attention of policy makers to the predicament of school dropouts.

5.2. A cost-effective method for reintegrating young people who lack skills and qualifications – the case for mainstreaming

The current evaluation of the Second Chance Schools demonstrates that they have had a 94% success rate in reintegrating some 4000 young people who lack basic skills and qualifications (see Annex 6). Whilst 55% of the pupils are still enrolled in the schools, 27% have found a job, 11% have gone on to other forms of training and education and 6% have dropped out. Moreover, a survey of a sample of current pupils demonstrates that 90% feel that their school has already brought about a genuine improvement in their situation.

When the Second Chance School scheme began in 1996, many experts and policy-makers believed that school dropouts should not be brought back to 'the place of failure' and that one should think more in terms of job creation, vocational training and social care when attempting to help this target group. The current report rejects this view in demonstrating that these young people need not necessarily have been lost to the education system in the first place. If 94% of dropouts can be rescued in a 'second chance' scheme then the question of whether the dropping out could have been prevented in the 'first chance' corresponding to mainstream education becomes critical.

By now, Member States accept that challenge and, during the operational period of the Second Chance Schools, have demonstrated increasing willingness to translate this acknowledgement into action in their national education policies. Part of their action will be preventive and include changes in the way schools function, while another part will involve strategies to reintegrate those who have already dropped out. The Second Chance Schools embody good practice relevant to both strategies – the methods of rescuing and reintegrating young people can often be just as valuable as a preventive measure. Prevention is often a "proactive rescue".

Those methods include local partnerships, in particular with employers, specially adapted and innovative teaching methods and an approach to young people in which all aspects

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[24] COM (1998) 605 final

[25] Resolution (1193, 1999 (1))

[26] Decision C(97) 2377 of 17/09/1997

of their personalities and circumstances are taken into account. New technologies and a European dimension also have a role to play.

Naturally, the projects have their price. Second Chance Schools require considerable educational resources corresponding to an average 5.9 pupils per teacher/tutor and 3.9 pupils per computer. In mainstream secondary education in the European Union, the figures are between 12.1 and 14.5 for the pupil/teacher ratio and 27.7 in the case of the pupil/computer ratio (see Annex 5 for details). The average cost of a Second Chance School per pupil is € 7901, whereas the corresponding figure in the regular education system is approximately € 4696 (unweighted average).

Nevertheless, this investment seems to be justified by the results. The ability of Second Chance Schools effectively to retain and assist so many pupils represents a good return on investment.

The basic objective of a Second Chance School is to 'turn the clock back' and reintegrate school dropouts into education and training. One should bear in mind that the whole population in fact consists of people with negative school experiences who may thus be more likely to fail, even in a 'second chance' project. Many other valuable initiatives which Member States have launched, have indeed experienced difficulties with retaining this difficult target population. Schemes such as the UK New Start programme (21% drop out in the personal adviser pilot projects[27]), Danish production schools (45% drop out without completing the full programme in question[28]), the Irish Youthreach programme (38% of the 1998 course participants left before finishing the programme[29]) or the Spanish workshop schools (13%[30]) all face a constant challenge in developing strategies to reduce the number of participants abandoning courses prematurely. In France[31], 18,5% of young job seekers who start vocational training courses abandon their efforts. Only 20% of that starting population consists of disadvantaged young people comparable to those in second chance schools and it is believed that, among them, the rate of premature departure may be twice as great.

With a high per capita investment in pupils, it is essential to demonstrate that significant numbers are retained. Against this backdrop, the methodological approach of Second Chance Schools appears to give good value for money. By way of illustration, programmes such as the workshop schools in Spain and the Irish Youthreach programme calculate the costs[32] per pupil at € 8955 and € 11,900 respectively. This supports the contention that, with a retainment ratio of 94%, the Second Chance School method is positively situated in terms of cost effectiveness, at an average cost of € 7901 per pupil. The scope of the current report is too limited to offer an in-depth cost-benefit evaluation. However, although the additional educational resources of Second Chance Schools mean that they are significantly more expensive than mainstream education, their lighter local structure may actually make them less expensive than nationally organised job insertion schemes.

National schemes such as those referred to here nonetheless all play a vital part in the lives of young people and society as a whole. Schemes of this kind are undergoing constant development and have their own unique learning curves. Their results have to be assessed and understood in relation to their specific institutional and socio-economic contexts. In some instances, a high dropout rate from such a scheme does not point to a failing programme but a booming economy, which creates demand on the labour market, including demand for less qualified labour. This applies to the evaluation undertaken for the Irish and

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27 Final evaluation of the personal adviser pilot projects, Department for Education and Employment, Sudbury June 2000, ISBN 1 84185 2910)

28 Evaluation of the Danish production schools, Ministery for Education, http://www.uvm.dk/pub/2000/prod/16.htm

29 Source: Department of Education and Science, Dublin (IRL) 2001

30 Evaluation of the workshop schools, source: National Employment Office (INEM), Madrid 2001

31 Source: Association nationale pour la Formation Professionelle des Adultes (AFPA), Montreuil (F) 2001

32 Sources: Youthreach programme Ireland and National Labour Office (INEM) Spain. Amounts are corrected for purchasing power disparities (PPS). Amounts in national currency are £ 8 527 and Ptas 1 200 000

Spanish programmes. More generally, higher dropout from one programme compared to another may also indicate that the target groups are not entirely similar, with one programme perhaps catering for more difficult pupils.

Retainment strategies are only one of many fields in which second chance schemes can learn from each other. There is a need for continued effort and exchange of experience in this area, both at European and national level. Many of the schemes are usually undervalued and risk being under-financed, although the 'costs of non-inclusion' (expenditure on social benefits, social stability, safety, criminality, health, hygiene, urban impoverishment, lack of qualified human resources in companies, etc.) are not easily discernible and not usually taken into account when schemes are assessed. Neither are these initiatives often closely linked at European level. The Second Chance School scheme has lent more weight to efforts to strengthen such links, providing an opportunity and 'banner' for local players throughout Europe who are concerned with inclusive training/education to work together. There is a need to recognise and acknowledge the importance of second chance projects and bolster the political resolve for action in the field.

In this respect, the evaluators raise the point of the long-term sustainability and prolongation of the pilot projects.

According to the report[33], *' pilot projects and pilot phases are successful if policy-makers and experts are able to, and display enough will to, take advantage of their positive results and experiences and use these for future long-term political concepts and implementation. (...) Second Chance School experiences, results and output provide the ground for future common education and training actions against exclusion at a European level. (...) After all this mobilisation of resources and the positive and encouraging results that some schools have obtained, it will be unfortunate if the initiatives do not go beyond the pilot phase'.*

Indeed, the Second Chance pilot schools are not all sustainable. Many of them are funded as a 'project' rather than as a 'educational establishment' and rely heavily on local, regional and European funds (see Annex 8), which are project-based, non-structural and subject to periodic review and decision-making cycles which are not always politically unbiased.

The need to acquire formal recognition of the diplomas and qualifications of the Second Chance School-leavers is also an argument in favour of 'mainstreaming' the Second Chance School pilot experience within national education and training systems.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Second Chance Schools play a significant role in the reintegration of young people lacking basic skills and competencies. National education and training systems should therefore consider ways of mainstreaming the schools within their formal education systems, whilst retaining the advantages of flexibility and partnership offered by local solutions.

5.3. The importance of the European dimension

Although the role of Europe in undertaking pilot projects in education was still controversial in early debate prior to launching the Second Chance Schools, the European dimension has in fact emerged as an essential vehicle for initiating the projects and for 'joint learning' between them. Evidence suggests that many cities and local initiatives are keen to acquire a European pilot label because it allows them to muster the necessary goodwill, support and publicity to pursue the project successfully from start to finish. It is an important marketing tool.

More importantly, it has made the schools very attractive both for the pupils and the teachers. For Second Chance Schools to succeed, it was vital that they were perceived as being different and 'better' than regular schools, and the European dimension has certainly played an important role in conveying this image. It has also enabled disadvantaged young people, who had often been confined to the narrow margins of a life of deprivation, to gain access to a European stage. This 'cultural revolution' in their lives has boosted their sense of self-

[33] 'Second Chance Schools - summary report on the evaluation of the European pilot schools', BBJ BiPaG mbH, Berlin, October 2000, Chapter 8 pages 102-104. The report is published in EN, FR, DE, ES and IT on internet, http//europa.eu.int/comm/education/2chance/evaluation_en.html

esteem, which is important for the teachers who help them to succeed.

The main place for action against school failure and social exclusion is locally, in the schools, neighbourhoods and cities. The national contribution is essential in ensuring the financial sustainability of local initiatives, and in recognising the effort invested and the qualifications which pupils acquire in these schemes. At national level, the debate on the prevention of school dropout and the mainstreaming of good practice in fighting dropout must be intensified. The European level can be of great value in networking these initiatives. In doing so, it helps mobilise the teachers and pupils, and provides for the comparison of results, the identification of good practice and consistent feed-back into the policy process at European level. All three levels therefore have an important part to play in fighting school dropout and social exclusion.

5.4. From a pilot project to a shared responsibility

This report has set out the accomplishments of the Second Chance School pilot projects. With the schools all operational and often successful in transforming the lives of young disadvantaged people who had turned away from education, now is arguably the time for the European Commission to withdraw from its role as general coordinator of the scheme. In doing so, this responsibility is transferred in two directions.

It is transferred, first, to the cities, the schools and the European association, which are encouraged to maintain the course charted by the pilot projects, and continue to work for the inclusion of those who most need project support.

Secondly, responsibility is passed on to the education authorities in the Member States. This report shows one way in which disadvantaged young people without basic skills and qualifications can be helped and reintegrated into society. The methods used can be a source of inspiration, both in preventing school-failure in the first place, and in giving a second chance to those for whom initial prevention has not been possible.

The pilot projects show that those who have dropped out from school still have very much to offer and that, in appropriate circumstances, education establishments can unlock a wealth of resources which our societies might otherwise cast aside. At a time of ageing populations, tighter labour markets and the acceptance that our knowledge society as a whole calls for higher levels of qualification, this is a message we cannot afford to ignore.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

COMPOSITION OF THE EXTERNAL EXPERT GROUPS

In the call for tender, the evaluation of the Second Chance Schools was divided into five different lots, three of which were thematic and two of which were horizontal:

LOT 1: Writing of a synthesis report and a publication to disseminate the results
Beratungs-, Projektmanagement- und Personalentwicklungsgesellschaft (BBJ) - Berlin (D)
http://www.bbj.de

LOT 2: Investigate the partnership dimension of the schools
Centrum voor Europese Studies en Opleidingen (CESO) - Maastricht (NL)
http://www.ceso.nl/
Collège Cooperatif Provence Alpes Méditerranée, Aix-en-Provence (F)
http://sceco.univ-aix.fr/collcoop/index.html

LOT 3: Investigate the dimension of the teaching methods employed in the schools
Centrum voor Europese Studies en Opleidingen (CESO) - Maastricht (NL)
AIKE International Ltd, Helsinki (Finlande)
http://www.aike.fi/aikeint_index.html

LOT 4: Investigate the characteristics and progression of the target group
Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques (CIEP)- Sevres (F)
http://www.ciep.fr

LOT 5: Co-ordination of the group of experts
Beratungs-, Projektmanagement- und Personalentwicklungsgesellschaft (BBJ) - Berlin (D)

ANNEX 2

SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS: SEQUENCE OF LAUNCH

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Accepted as pilot project	Marseille	Bilbao Athens Catania Hämeenlinna Halle Cologne Heerlen Leeds Seixal	Barcelona Norrköping	Svendborg	
Actual launch (start of courses)		Bilbao Cologne Hämeenlinna Halle	Marseille Barcelona Leeds	Catania Heerlen Norrköping Svendborg	Seixal Athens

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ANNEX 3

NATURE OF THE SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS

School	Creation of a new establishment	Start-up of a new activity within an existing establishment	Relabelling of an existing project or establishment	Networking
Athens	X			
Barcelona				X
Bilbao	X			
Catania	X			
Cologne			X	
Halle		X		
Hämeenlinna				X
Heerlen	X			
Leeds	X			
Marseille	X			
Norrköping		X		
Seixal	X			
Svendborg			X	

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ANNEX 4

NUMBER, AGE AND GENDER OF PUPILS

School	Number of pupils	Boys	Girls	Surplus of boys over girls	Age group	Majority group
Athens	47	14	33	- 19	21-42	+ 30
Barcelona	350	–	–	–	16-25	16-18
Bilbao	190	146	44	+ 102	16-22	16-18
Catania	54	36	18	+ 18	16-20	–
Cologne	840	457	383	+ 74	16-24	+ 18
Halle	24	24	0	+ 24	15-19	16-17
Hämeenlinna	184	116	68	+ 48	15-25	–
Heerlen	24	22	2	+ 20	16-24	–
Leeds	45	23	22	+ 1	16-24	18-20
Marseille	220	120	100	+ 20	16-25	18-22
Norrköping	32	23	9	+ 14	16+	–
Seixal	39	17	22	- 5	16-25	–
Svendborg	237	134	103	+ 31	16-25	16-20
TOTAL	**2.286**			**+ 330 (14.5%)**		

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ANNEX 5

THE SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS COMPARED WITH SECONDARY EDUCATION

Second Chance School	Number of pupils per teacher/tutor		Number of pupils per computer		Percentage of Schools connected to Internet		Cost in Euro per pupil		
	SCS	Country[1]	SCS	Country[2]	SCS	Country[3]	SCS	SCS (PPS)	Country[4] (PPS)
Athens (G)	2.8	11.5	1.8	58	yes	18 %	5 235	7 205	2 150
Barcelona (E)	8.8	12.1	2	97	yes	95 %	6 352	7 887	4 549
Bilbao (E)	7.6	12.1	4	97	yes	95 %	4 745	5 891	4 549
Catania (I)	5.4	9.9	1.6	23	yes	91 %	11 477	12 526	5 694
Köln TAS (D)	10.1	15.5	9	40	yes	80 %	3 717	3 411	4 196
Köln VHS (D)	6.9	15.5	3.5	40	yes	80 %	10 189	9 351	4 196
Leeds (UK)	7.5	16.7	2.5	7.9	yes	98 %	8010	6 950	4 398
Marseille (F)	10.5	12.8	3.7	14.5	yes	85 %	9091	8 360	6 501
Norrköping (S)	3.6	15.3	2.1	5	yes	99 %	4000	3 307	5025
Hämeelinna (FI)	1.3	11	13.1	11.5	yes	96 %	5000	4 840	4 614
Heerlen (NL)	4.8	18.5	3	18	yes	86 %	9 725	9 930	4 678
Halle (D)	3.4	15.5	1.8	40	yes	80 %	6 667	6 119	4 196
Seixal (P)	4.3		2.3	2	yes	100 %	11026	17043	4 310
Svendborg (DK)	6.8	10.3	2.4	6.6	yes	100 %	9 500	7 805	6 699
Average of Averages	5.9	12.1	3.9	27.7	All	86 %	7 481	7 901	4 696
EU Average		14.5							

SOURCES OF DATA

Second Chance Schools

Sources for Second Chance School data from: 'Second Chance Schools' Summary Report on the evaluation of the European Pilot Projects. BBJ Consultancy. Berlin, October 2000.

Number of Pupils per Teacher/Tutor

[1] Source: OECD 'Education at a Glance 2000' data from 1998. In the case of Finland, the figure is for lower secondary education. For Denmark and Italy, the ratios were calculated on the basis of data provided in Eurydice 'Key Data on Education in Europe 1999-2000' (pp. 210-236) on

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lower secondary education (ISCED 2) from 1996/1997 on the assumption that part-time teachers in Denmark are working on average 50%. For Portugal no data on teachers was provided.

The EU average at the bottom of the column is taken from Eurydice 'Key Data on Education in Europe 1999-2000' (pp. 210-236) on lower secondary education (ISCED 2) from 1996/1997 again on the assumption that part-time teachers are working on average 50%. The EU average is approximate because it excludes data from Belgium, France, Ireland, Portugal and Sweden. The 'average of averages' therefore contributes to a fuller picture, but is an unweighted average of the ratios in the column. More recent or comparable data were not available at the time of writing.

Number of Students per Computer

2 Source: Eurydice 'Average/Estimate Number of Computers per school and Average/estimate number of pupils per computer' Draft Preliminary Document. January 2001. For Spain and Greece the most recent data is from 1995 (OECD Education at a Glance 1998). For Germany and Denmark data source: European Schoolnet 2001.

Percentage of Schools connected to the Internet

3 Source: COM(2001) 79 Final. Communication from the Commission. 'Realising the European Union's Potential: Consolidating and Extending the Lisbon Strategy.' Page 19 data from 1999-2000.

Cost in Euro per Student

4 Figures for the Countries are PPS figures from 1997. Eurostat, UOE (Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) implies that amounts in national currency are adjusted for purchasing power disparities and converted into EURO.)

For Second Chance Schools the ratios in the annual budget of the school per pupil include salaries, administration, course material, equipment, write-offs /depreciation, maintenance, services, etc.

The country figures include all expenditure incurred by the school, whether financed from public funding or private sources

ANNEX 6

SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS: BREAKDOWN OF PUPILS

Projects	Total number of students	Students currently enrolled		Students who have completed school[34]		Dropouts		Reoriented	
1997 Projects									
Bilbao	327	190	58 %	120	37 %	0	0 %	17	5 %
Cologne	1461	840	57 %	406	28 %	106	7 %	109	7 %
Hämeenlinna	269	184	68 %	81	30 %	4	1 %	0	0 %
Halle	39	24	62 %	11	28 %	1	3 %	3	8 %
Subtotal	2096	1238	59 %	618	29 %	111	5 %	129	6 %
1998 Projects									
Marseille	285	220	77 %	40	14 %	10	4 %	15	5 %
Leeds	72	45	63 %	11	15 %	10	14 %	6	8 %
Subtotal	357	265	74 %	51	14 %	20	6 %	21	6 %
1999 Projects									
Catania	78	54	69 %	8	10 %	10	13 %	6	8 %
Heerlen	26	24	92 %	0	0 %	2	8 %	0	0 %
Norrköping	40	32	80 %	2	5 %	1	3 %	5	13 %
Svendborg	818	237	29 %	280	34 %	72	9 %	229	28 %
Subtotal	962	347	36 %	290	30 %	85	9 %	240	25 %
2000 Projects									
Seixal	41	39	95 %	0	0 %	2	5 %	0	0 %
Athens	47	47	100 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
Subtotal	88	86	98 %	0	0 %	2	2 %	0	0 %
Total	3503	1936	55 %	959	27 %	218	6 %	390	11 %
As no data are available for the Barcelona school, it has been left to one side for the purpose of calculating precise totals for the other schools.									
Barcelona	350	350		N/A		N/A		N/A	

[34] Data on insertion into the labour market is not complete at this stage. See comments on pages 9 and 22. In the current table 'completed' refers to students who have completed the whole programme and obtained the diploma or certificate.

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ANNEX 7

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TARGET GROUP

Question to headmasters of the schools: what percentage of your pupils do you consider:
(percentages above 25% are light shaded, above 50% medium shaded, above 75% dark shaded)

	Live under the poverty line	Have fragile psycho-social personalities	Have health problems	Have fragile families	Come from immigrant backgrounds
Cologne TAS	10	20	20	40	14
Cologne VHS	9	33	20	45	45
Svendborg	3	23	22	44	8
Marseille	50	100	60	65	70
Bilbao	0	11	6	26	0
Hämeenlinna	14	11	18	24	2
Catania	74	1	0	22	0
Leeds	78	33	18	89	4
Athens	0	13	0	15	0
Seixal	36	26	46	77	23
Norrköping	78	38	28	78	41
Heerlen	0	63	63	100	29
Halle	0	21	42	100	0

No data available from Barcelona

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ANNEX 8

FINANCING OF THE SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS

Largest share is shaded blue

School	EU funds	State	Local	Private	Other
Cologne TAS	–	60	30	–	10
Cologne VHS	15	15	45	–	25
Svendborg	13	86	1	–	–
Marseille	5	28	55	–	12
Bilbao	50	50 (Basque Country)	–	–	–
Catania	–	95	5	–	–
Leeds	45	10	43	2	–
Athens	65	35	–	–	–
Seixal	75	–	25	–	–
Norrköping	–	–	100	–	–
Heerlen	20	20	50	–	10
Halle	–	70	20	5	5
Barcelona	–	–	100	–	–

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ANNEX 9

SECOND CHANCE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Principal areas are shaded in blue

Note that these are proportions of total teacher hours, pupils can have individual programmes

field	Basic skills	Vocat. training	Life skills (social, cross-curric.)	ICT	Languages	Other
Athens	40	10	20	20	10	
Bilbao	14	70	7	1	4	4
Catania	10	10	20	30	30	
Cologne/ TAS	40	20	20	10	10	
Cologne/ VHS	30	50	5	5	10	
Halle	20	50	10	5		15
Hämeenlinna Karpaasi[35]	10	10	80			
Hämeenlinna workshop	2	81	15	2		
Heerlen	10	5	25	20	5	35
Leeds	27	7	26	31	4	5
Marseille	60	25		10	5	
Norrköping	16	63	12	4	5	
Svendborg	15	35	35	12	2	

No data available on Barcelona

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[35] The Hämeenlinna school is here separated in two parts of the 'hub', the workshop part is focused on life skills, whereas Karpaasi deals with a group with special problems such as drug or alcohol abuse, etc.

European Commission

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The results of a European pilot project

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